

THE GREAT INDIAN NATURE TRAIL

WITH
CHUNMUN



ROHAN CHAKRAVARTY

WITH ESSAYS BY BIJAL VACHHARAJANI



Juggernaut





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Disclaimer: The maps in the book are not to scale and do not depict the political boundaries accurately.

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Explorers, welcome back!

Or if this is the first time you are getting aboard The Great Indian Nature Trail, then, welcome.

The Great Indian Nature Trail took place with Uncle Bikky, his dog Duggu and his niece, Chunmun who, in part one, was a budding wildlife photographer. Since then, Chunmun has grown up and is now the youngest person in India to win a grant from the *Kingdom Animalia* magazine to work on a wildlife photo essay.

She gets to visit the Western Ghats, the North-east of India, the tide pools and rivers of this country and the forests. She gets to meet some amazing people on her adventures – scientists, naturalists, filmmakers and researchers. All of them introduce her to a different facet of wildlife.

And you get to join her!

Congrats, you've won a virtual ticket to join Chunmun on her wild expedition across India.

So what are you waiting for? Pack your bags, don't forget to add a pair of binoculars, you are going to need that. And maybe some... wait, one of the most carbon-friendly kind of travel is the one that you are going to do – by enjoying a staycation (a vacation where you stay at home) and read this book.

Happy adventuring!

Rohan and Bijal

BUCKLE UP!

Where all is Chunmun travelling? Here's a sneak peek.



WHO ALL DOES CHUNMUN MEET?

Here are some of the species you will meet in the book. Once you do meet them, don't forget to tick them off here. Bonus points if you've met them in real life.

Chestnut-breasted Partridge	Indian Humpback Dolphin
Bugun Liocichla	Fungoid Frog
Collared Owlet	Malabar Gliding Frog
Slater's Monal	Indian Purple Frog
Hoolock Gibbon	Owlfly
Indian Tent Turtle	Antlion
Gangetic Dolphin	Ant-mimic Spider
Hangul	Sea Anemone
Striped Hyena	Sand Bubbler Crab
Rusty-spotted Cat	Hermit Crab
Indian Leopard	Seastar
Fishing Cat	Amur Falcon
Greenish Warbler	Crested Kingfisher
Indian Skimmer	Brown Dipper
Gharial	A very special bird you're rather unlikely to ever meet!



FROM THE NORTH-EAST, WITH LOVE



**WOOF!
WRRUFFF!!**



**GOOD MORNING POSTMASTER
DUGGU! WHAT HAVE YOU
GOT THERE?**



**A PARCEL FROM CHUNMUN,
ALL THE WAY FROM
ARUNACHAL!**

To,
MR. BIKASH
GANGULY

FROM
CHUNMUN
GANGULY

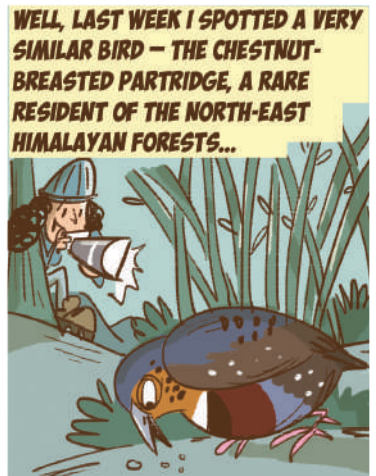


**HEY, OLD PAL! HOW IS THE
ARTHRITIS TREATING YOU?**

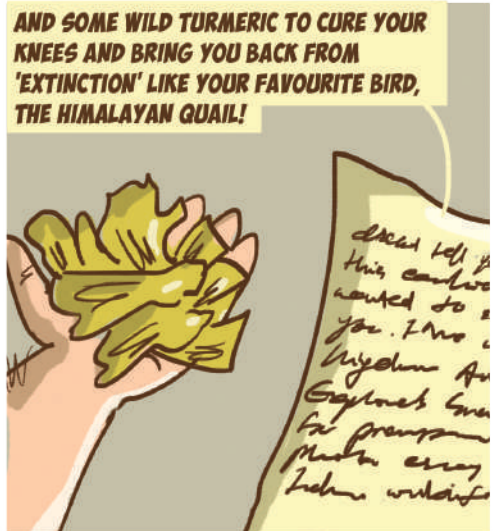


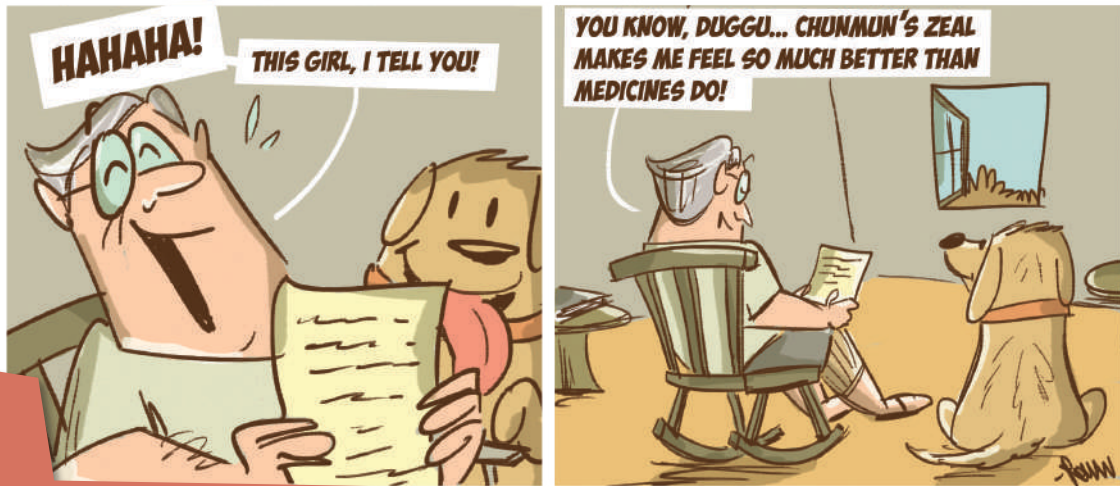
**REMEMBER OUR TRIP TO UTTARAKHAND
WHEN WE TREKKED HOPING TO REDISCOVER
THE HIMALAYAN QUAIL, BUT FLUSHED OUT
A HILL PARTRIDGE INSTEAD?**

KURRRRR!



**WELL, LAST WEEK I SPOTTED A VERY
SIMILAR BIRD – THE CHESTNUT-
BREASTED PARTRIDGE, A RARE
RESIDENT OF THE NORTH-EAST
HIMALAYAN FORESTS...**





Isn't Chunmun's work amazing? She gets to travel across India, photographing and learning about the country's biodiversity.

WHAT DOES A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER DO?

Of course, they get to travel to tonnes and tonnes of places – from forests to rivers to deserts and even to the ice caps. But it's not just all travelling. Photography is a lot of work and responsibility. They look for stories through their camera, tell stories with their images, and we all know... *a picture is worth a thousand words.*

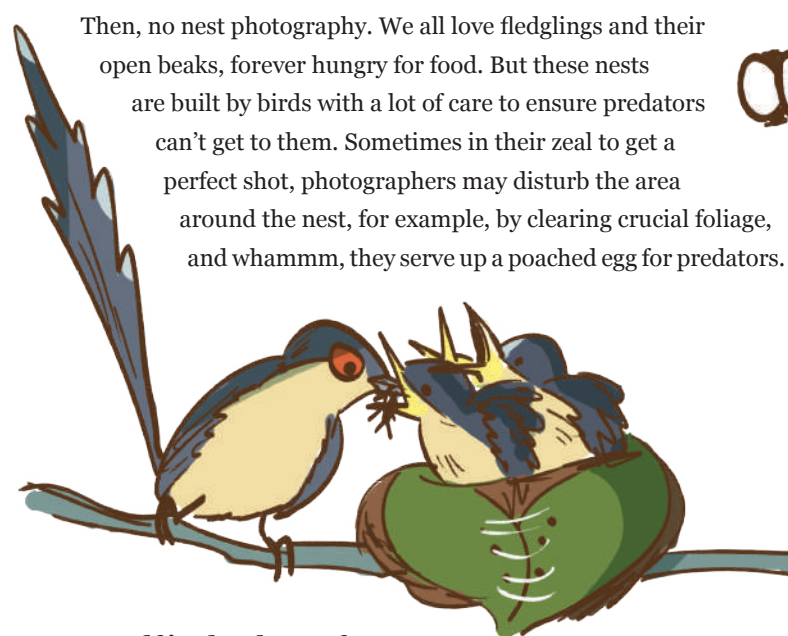
With their images, photographers have told us about the way animals live in the wild – their social behaviour and feeding habits. They have taken us to different parts of the world to see habitats such as rainforests and cloud forests, grasslands and mangroves, wetlands and deserts. Photographers have acquainted us with fungi and microbes, carnivorous plants and algae; also, made us care about issues such as poaching, climate change and habitat degradation. They have aided in the constant discovery that the Earth is a unique home to live in, and we are lucky to share it with such amazing flora and fauna.



BEYOND THE SHOT

The first thing that wildlife photographers have to keep in mind is that they do need to get the best shot, of course. Excuse me, a film shot! What did you think? It's the only shot we are talking about in this book. Unless we are condemning poaching.

Yes, back to shooting, of the right kind. Photographers need to get the best shot without impacting the fragile habitat they are in. In fact, that's so important that there are even unwritten rules for wildlife photography. Such as, don't use lights at night for that perfect shot of an owl or a bat. This is easy to figure, right?



Then, no nest photography. We all love fledglings and their open beaks, forever hungry for food. But these nests are built by birds with a lot of care to ensure predators can't get to them. Sometimes in their zeal to get a perfect shot, photographers may disturb the area around the nest, for example, by clearing crucial foliage, and whamm, they serve up a poached egg for predators.

Put yourself in the shoes of... a wildlife photographer!

- What would your day look like?
- How would you help wildlife with your photos?
- Most importantly, how would you ensure you won't harm wildlife with your camera?

SOME AWESOME WOMEN WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND FILMMAKERS

Munmun Dhalaria: That's right, the inspiration behind Chunmun is a real-life filmmaker. Her films include *The Jujurana's Kingdom*, *On the Brink* and *COVID Response*.

Arati Kumar-Rao: Ever met an explorer? That's who this environmental photographer is, she's a *National Geographic* explorer and she writes, draws and takes photos!

Ami Vitale: The North American photojournalist has taken some amazing photos of elephants and pandas. Don't miss them.

Ashima Narain: Bears, flamingos and leopards are just some of the subjects of Ashima's camera.



DRAW

Can you imagine Uncle Bikky wailing like the Hill Partridge? Now go listen to the bird's call, and then, learn how to draw the bird, wail and all.



FUN FACTS

1. The Chestnut-breasted Partridge's Latin name, *Arborophila mandellii*, is said to commemorate the Italian naturalist Louis Mandelli, who lived and worked in Darjeeling.
 2. This partridge, like many other partridges and pheasants, has spurs at the back of its feet, which males use in combat with rivals!
 3. The 'Bhoot Jolokia' (which translates to 'Ghost Pepper'), grows in the hills of North-east India, and is one of the hottest chillies in the world!
 4. Wild turmeric is widely believed to have antiseptic and therapeutic properties, and is used to treat a variety of ailments in Ayurveda.
- Q. Which part of the turmeric plant does 'haldi powder' come from?

HUNGRY FOR MORE?

Did you see that Chunmun sent some bhoot jolokia chillies for Uncle Bikky? It has the distinction of being one of the spiciest naturally-occurring chillies in the whole wide world, and it's grown right here in the North-east of India.

Wait, how is spiciness measured? Is it by downing different chillies and seeing which one makes you weep the most?

No way!

There's something called the Scoville Heat Units (SHU), which is a way of measuring spiciness by the concentration of capsaicin (that's the chemical that has you reaching for water when you eat something spicy). The bhoot jolokia or ghost pepper has an average rating of 1,041,427 SHU.



GROW A CHILLI AT HOME

It's really easy! Raid your fridge. Take a chilli, carefully slice it and remove the seeds from the inside. Be careful not to touch your eyes or any part of your face! Don't forget to wash your hands properly.

Dry them for a couple of days. Sow them in soil, a couple of centimetres deep. Now water it every two days. The seeds should germinate in a week or so. In a couple of months, get ready to see beautiful white flowers. Once they wither, it's the chilli's time to bloom. Here's a place to paste the photo of your cool but hot chilli plant.

Riddle Dee Dee like the rhyme

They don't laugh back when you tell plants a joke, but if you choose a windy day, they will shake (with laughter). If you're not the funny sort, sing a song or just chat to the plant.

In a study,¹ researchers found that plants can sense sound vibrations – such as running water – and then their roots inch towards the water source! In fact, plants move away from noises they don't like. So, if the leaves start looking away, blame it on your jokes.



Don't forget to talk to your chilli plant and take care of it.

Jokes like these are much appreciated

Knock knock,

Who's there?

Chilli.

Chilli who?

It's chilli out here, open the door quickly.

